2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

2. Free men are under their elder brother in the first instance, but they may carry their cases to the headman of their village or even to the chief of the country.
3. Slaves were entirely under their own master.[1]

The headmen's subservience to the chief is described in the following passage:

> In all public transactions the headman represents his village. He receives the chief's orders and sees them carried out. When he kills an elephant he sends one of the tusks to the chief. Should he kill twenty elephants he is not expected to give up twenty tusks—two or three would be sufficient. If he shoots a large buck he gives one haunch of venison. For all such tributes he expects to receive in return a present (generally a little powder). . . . He is expected to attend the chief's parliament unless he is under an elder brother in which case he is not allowed to speak, except when especially commissioned. Headmen are expected to report all cases of war, but they often attack enemies without telling their chief beforehand, saying, 'Let him hear of the enterprise when it succeeds.' Yet this is dangerous unless they are sure of success, and well acquainted with the chief's private sentiments. On reporting an attack they present the chief with part of the booty. In times of war each headman when summoned, must follow his chief's flag, otherwise his village is burned down, and all that fail to escape are killed or enslaved.[2]

Yet within the framework of this organization villages were markedly autonomous. MacDonald's description, which I have just quoted, brings this out very well. Elsewhere he writes: 'The chief may often have less influence than powerful headmen, and we have known cases where he simply contented himself with grumbling when his headmen acted contrary to his desire.'[3] The chief did not differ greatly from his more powerful headmen. A certain amount of ritual in terms of ancestor worship embellished his position, and he had some ascendancy over village headmen to whom he had given land. Yet, in the last analysis, the chief had to rely on his personal following and military power to subjugate headmen who were becoming too powerful. The chief was therefore in direct competition with his subject village headmen, and involved in a constant struggle with them for followers. MacDonald describes how the chief himself was a

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 155.
[2] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 157.
[3] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 155.